

...WHY... SOCIALISTS PAY ...DUES...

Issued by the National Committee of the Socialist Party.

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WHY SOCIALISTS PAY DUES

The Socialist party, being a party of, by and for the wage-working class AND THOSE IN SYMPATHY WITH IT, proceeds upon the theory that the workers, as a class, must emancipate themselves from wage-slavery, and must consequently develop their own capacity for this great purpose.

Hence, while welcoming all assistance from individuals of other classes who are in sympathy with its objects and its aims, the Socialist party relies, first last and all the time, on the working class for its support politically and otherwise. Not being a paternal organization, the means for the party's maintenance must come almost wholly from the rank and file of the organization.

Experience having demonstrated that the party cannot trust to luck in the conduct of its affairs, nor rely upon haphazard donations for its revenues, it has established THE DUES-PAYING SYSTEM, which is in vogue in the party throughout the world.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DUES-PAYING SYSTEM

There are those who object to the dues-paying system in our party on the following grounds:

- 1.—It humiliates impoverished members and applicants for membership.
- 2.—“It places the dollar above the man.”
- 3.—No other political party has such a system.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

The first reason is strictly Utopian. “Poverty is no disgrace,” but is the logical result of the competitive system. This being so, it is foreign to the spirit of our movement for members or applicants to feel “humiliated” because they cannot pay dues. Our dues system exacts payments from those who are able to pay, and all others are excused. A false feeling of shame shows a capitalistic state of mind, which must be overcome.

The second reason is also entirely erroneous. Nowhere in the world does our party exclude applicants or expel members because of their inability to pay dues. Hence the party does not “place the dollar above the man.”

We emphasize the fact that all are welcome to our ranks, regardless of their financial condition, but very properly insist that all who can do so shall contribute regularly to the necessary and unavoidable expenses of the organization.

The third reason only shows the difference in methods between political parties of capitalism and the Socialist party as a revolutionary organization of the working class. Certainly the “old parties” have no dues-paying system; in fact, they need none, as the corruption funds “for value received” are ample to support them at all times, especially during campaigns. The support comes from above in these paternal organizations—from the trust magnates, the silver barons, or the “business men” who live on labor's fleece. The Socialist party, on the contrary, relies upon its membership for support at all times, fighting the capitalist class, not only on election day, but every other day in the year, and strengthening and advancing its propaganda and political organization. This means expense and a dues-paying system.

The enemy can hardly be expected to furnish our ammunition in this great class conflict, so the workers must furnish their own “sinews of war.”

Comrades who have evolved through the old parties cannot appreciate this position at first, but a little reflection will show its reason and its merits.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE DUES-PAYING SYSTEM

The following propositions will illustrate the reason for a dues-paying system:

1. The Socialist party may be called the family of the working class.
2. A family, in order to live (under the competitive system), must have financial support.
3. The family necessarily relies upon its members for support.
4. It is the plain duty of all able-bodied members of the family to contribute their share towards its maintenance.
5. As a matter of justice, and not charity, all sick, unemployed or otherwise incapacitated members of the family are excused from this obligation.
6. No “humiliation” should be felt by those of the family so crippled. But it is the duty of all the other members to provide for them, and the rule of the family is that they should do so, or leave the house.

OBSERVATIONS

Narrowness of view of the Socialist movement and the work of the party is also responsible for unwarranted protest against and disregard for the dues-paying system. Many comrades feel that their particular locality should receive special attention and make this "criminal neglect" a reason for withholding dues.

Inasmuch as our party is national in its scope, and the funds at all times insufficient to cover the full territory, the revenues must be distributed where they will do the most good at a given time.

This might mean New York one day, California the next and Pennsylvania or Illinois the day following. This local or state feeling should not characterize our party members, and the movement and its needs should be considered, not in part, BUT AS A WHOLE.

DUES-PAYING ORGANIZATIONS

It is a noticeable fact that organizations of the wage-workers the world over maintain a dues-paying system, notwithstanding that the members' employment is more precarious and spasmodic than any other elements in the labor movement. The coal miners, for instance—who do not average employment one-half of the year—derive their revenue strictly in this manner, and keep a well-filled treasury at all times. This is almost equally true of nearly all other trade union organizations, which are a shining example of the efficacy of a dues-paying system.

CONCLUSION

The principal objections to the dues-paying system come from outside the large cities, where there is little, if any, industrial organization, and where the concept of the movement is more "ideal" than practical. The objections are more sentimental than logical, being based on a "mistaken principle." We must not forget that we are living under the competitive system, and that pending its abolition our movement requires funds for its support from its members; that we must have system for this purpose, and that dependence on "philanthropists" and "voluntary subscriptions" alone tends to demoralize, rather than to strengthen, the party. The emancipation of the working class must, on the whole, rest with the working class, who must devise their own ways and means for the purpose. AND THIS IS WHY SOCIALISTS PAY DUES.